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THE MASTERS OF THE WILDERNESS:

A STUDY OF

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

FROM ITS ORIGIN TO MODERN TIMES

A PAPER READ BEFORE

THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 16, 1909

BY

CHARLES B. REED, M. D.

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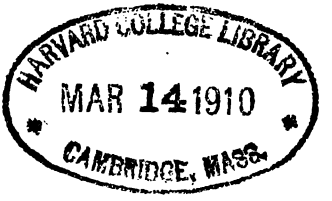

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THE MASTERS OF THE WILDERNESS

BY

CHARLES B. REED

The question of a Northwest Passage to India and the South Seas has stimulated the mind and kindled the imagination of mankind for four hundred years. From the very first a fascinating theory, it soon became a necessary obsession, for the fierce activities of the triumphant Turks rendered the usual routes to the Indies too perilous for commerce, and Christian nations, especially Holland and England, turned with intense eagerness to the solution of this problem. Defeated in the immediate object, their efforts nevertheless exercised an incalculable influence over the entire world. With the single exception of the cognate adventure, the search for the North Pole, it is probable that no other quest has added so immensely to those arts and industries which make for the promotion of science and the advancement of civilization. That such a passage actually existed has been recognized since the voyage of Sir Edward Parry in 1820 and the fact was confirmed by the expedition of McClure in 1857, yet the complete passage from sea to sea had never succeeded until the recent memorable voyage of Captain Amundson in 1903-06. Among the earlier navigators who received the crown of immortality through their efforts to achieve this quest, none is more meritoriously conspicuous than Henry Hudson, who in 1607 hammered his way through the ice floes to 80° north latitude. Next he thought to break through on the south, and in 1609 he discovered and explored the Chesapeake

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and Delaware Bays, the harbor of New York, where he was attacked by natives, and sailed up the Hudson River as far as the present site of Albany. But the lure of the Northern route was strong upon him, and in 1610 he undertook the voyage which was at the same time the source of his greatest renown and the cause of his dreary death.

Passing through Hudson Straits, he entered the Bay which also bears his name and guided his ship cautiously southward. Sustained by an indomitable spirit, he rose superior to many difficulties and dangers, and spent over a year exploring the harbors, inlets and adjacent coasts of this great inland sea. On attempting the homeward passage, however, he found he had delayed too long, and his crew, already disaffected by reason of the long voyage and the many strange hardships, suddenly became enraged at Hudson on account of his irascible temper, and rose in mutiny on June 11, 1611. They put Hudson, his little son, and five others into a shallop with a small amount of ammunition and provisions and sailed away.

In the narrative of this expedition written by Abaccus Prickett, one of the mutineers who succeeded in reaching England after a wearisome and perilous voyage, it is told how the old man with set features and flying gray locks, grimly made sail in pursuit of his ship until he was dropped below the horizon and never seen again.

We now know only too well the barriers which lie in the path of the Northwest Passage. Almost directly northeast of the mouth of the Fish River which Lieutenants Back and Simpson both found, there lies a vast mass of ice which can neither move toward Behring Strait on account of the shallow water, nor to Baffin Bay on account of the narrowness and crookedness of the channels. We know also from the reports of the Low expedition of 1903-04, that there are two open currents always flowing in the straits that lead to Hudson Bay;

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one along the northern shore inward and to the west, and one along the southern shore outward and eastward, bearing the raft ice of the Bay. These currents are so suitably disposed that by a slight change of course ships can navigate the straits and have the benefit of the current in either direction and sail with the ice floes rather than against them. We also know that Hudson Bay is simply a vast whirlpool 800 miles wide by 1,000 miles long which has been cut, grooved, and gouged out of the solid rock by those two powerful currents which bear in their puissant grasp the raft ice of the Arctic Sea, the ice of prehistoric ages.

Like a giant sand-blast these huge masses of ice have been whirled grinding and eroding around the Bay only to be disgorged through Hudson Straits upon the bosom of the broad Atlantic. Into this channel of rock, the Hudson Straits, 450 miles long, is jammed from the west, churned together and concentrated the area of an ice continent, and up this channel from the east runs a "tide-rip" thirty-five feet high. When the "tide-rip" and the ice meet there occurs what the old navigators of the Hudson's Bay Company called "the furious overfall."

One can with difficulty resist the temptation to pursue this interesting subject further, but this is not the story that we started to relate, but merely the scene of its beginning.

Impressed by the reports which various navigators brought back from this region, a company was formed for the purpose of exploiting the shores of the Bay and the wooded fastnesses of the interior. The company was organized originally at the instance of the French explorers, Radisson and his brother-in-law, Groseilliers, whose visit to the Hudson Bay country had revealed its boundless possibilities. Disappointed in enlisting an interest in the venture in Montreal, they applied to Sir George Carteret, who was then in America as a member of the Royal Commission appointed to settle a number

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of disputed questions between New York and New England.

It was through his influence that they met the King in 1666, but it was only after a long delay, and some say not without insistence on the part of Louise Querouaille, the King's mistress, who was also under deep obligations to Lord Arlington, that the charter was granted by Charles II in May, 1670. Quite early in the venture the promoters had obtained audience with Prince Rupert, who with historical fieriness entered enthusiastically into the undertaking and became the first Governor of the "Honorable Hudson's Bay Company." There is an uncontradicted story to the effect that the Prince received a lump sum of £10,000 for his interest and influence in securing the charter, but we much prefer to believe that his interest was engaged and his romantic mind inflamed by the adventurous nature of the project, rather than by monetary considerations. When the Prince died he was succeeded in the governorship by the Duke of York, the King's brother, who afterward resigned to become James II of England. The Duke indeed had been associated with the adventure from the beginning and the records show that his was the first name on the stock book, while opposite the name on the credit side of the account it states: "By a share presented to him in the stock and adventure by the Governor and Company, £300." We learn that among the many subscribers to the stock were to be found the King's cousin, his brother, afterward King James, the Duke of Albermarle, General Monk, who was largely responsible for the restoration of Charles, Henry, Earl of Arlington, a member of the ruling cabal, and Anthony, Earl of Shaftsbury, the versatile minister of the King, all of whom became directors in the new undertaking.

In their application for a charter the Company had urged the desirability of such a corporation as they contemplated as a means of (1) continuing the search for

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the Northwest Passage, (2) that in the progress of trade with the nations the blessings of civilization and religion should be brought to the Indians, and finally (3) that settlements could be affected to the glory of the King. We shall learn in the course of the narrative how quickly the Company lost sight of these high aims in the pursuit of a less noble purpose. The right of the King to grant such an instrument may be seriously questioned, but there was apparently no doubt in his own mind, and without evident qualms of conscience the "Merry Monarch" disposed of an expanse equal to the United States, except Alaska, "To our dear and entirely beloved cousin Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Duke of Bavaria, etc. (with the others) constituting the Governor and Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay." The charter states that the incorporators deserve the privileges because they "have at their own great cost and charges undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay in the northwest parts of America, for a discovery of a new passage into the South Sea and for the finding of some trade for furs, minerals and other considerable commodities and by such their undertakings, have already made such discoveries as to encourage them to proceed farther in pursuance of their said design, by means whereof there may probably arise great advantage to us and our kingdom."

With truly royal generosity Charles gives "The whole trade of all those seas, streights and bays, rivers, lakes, creeks and sounds, in whatsoever latitude they shall lie within the entrance of the streights commonly called Hudson's Streights, together with all the lands, countries and territories upon the coasts and confines of the seas, streights, bays, lakes and rivers, creeks and sounds aforesaid which are not now actually possessed by any of our subjects, *or by the subjects of any other Christian Prince or State.*"

Now the country watered by rivers flowing into Hud-

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son Bay extended two hundred miles to the east, three hundred miles to the south and sixteen hundred miles to the west, although by the terms of the charter it might extend to China as men at that time undoubtedly believed. From near the western end of Lake Superior, streams find their way by Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods to Lake Winnipeg and thence by Nelson River to Hudson Bay. From southwestern Minnesota the "Red River of the North" flows into Lake Winnipeg and thence into Hudson Bay. Hither also flows the mighty Saskatchewan, which, wide as the Mississippi, draws out its lingering and serpentine course for sixteen hundred miles from its remote origin in the very heart of the Rocky Mountains to that huge collecting basin, Lake Winnipeg, where its turbulent flood first finds temporary peace. This vast extent of territory was quite commensurate with the powers and privileges conferred, for the charter also reads that the "fisheries within Hudson's Streights, the minerals including gold, silver, gems and precious stones, shall be possessed by the Company." The whole land was to be held in "free and common socage", that is, as absolute proprietors. The Company was empowered to make laws not only for its own servants, but having force over all persons upon the lands. And further, "To judge all persons belonging to said Governor or Company, or that shall live under them, in all cases civil or criminal according to the laws of this kingdom and to execute justice accordingly."

"The Company is empowered to send ships of war, men or ammunition into their plantations and appoint commanders and officers and even to issue to them their commissions."

To make peace or war with any non-Christian people.

To build forts and fortifications and, what was more to the point, they were to have "the whole and only liberty of Trade and Traffick," and free power was given to seize upon the persons of all who might attempt to violate this provision.

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This, then, was the origin of that famous Company which for two hundred years held lordly sway over the "wintry lakes and boundless forests of the Canadas, exercising a power more absolute, if possible, than that of the potentates of the East India Company over the voluptuous climes and magnificent realms of the Orient."

It will be interesting now to consider briefly how rightfully Charles indulged his kingly bounty. The bestowal of such great privileges as those given to the Hudson's Bay Company may be accounted for in the prevailing idea as to the royal prerogative, but even in those days the grant was attacked and called invalid since it had not received the sanction of Parliament. A most troublesome feature of the charter was the exclusion of the "portion possessed by subjects of any other Christian Prince or State."

At that time Canada was undeniably French and there was no distinct boundary drawn between the territory of France on the south and that granted to the English Company on the Bay, but in the contemporaneous maps acknowledged as correct by both nations, the Saskatchewan and Red rivers were alike recognized as belonging to France, though both drained into Hudson Bay. By the eighth article of the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, the whole of Hudson Bay, excepting only Ft. Albany, was recognized as belonging to the Crown of France. The Company already somewhat uncertain as to its rights did not feel easier under the terms of the treaty and considerable anxiety was produced by the continual attacks of the French upon the Company's forts, which had been so far successful as almost to dispossess the English. In the same year that this treaty had been signed and by the terms of which each side was to keep what each then occupied, the indefatigable Iberville had conducted an expedition into the Bay, and secured possession of all the forts including even the long defiant Nelson (or York) after a brilliant naval

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engagement. But in spite of the attacks by Iberville and others, in spite of the capture and demolition of its forts, the Company held grimly to its privileges which every year of possession bound closer.

For the first time in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht was a portion of the shores of the Bay ceded to England. Thus forty-three years after the granting of the charter and twenty-eight years after the death of the grantor, could the English claim undisputed possession of a *part* of Hudson Bay, and then only was such a grant legally possible which Charles had made to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670.

Throughout it all, however, the disastrous results of actual and of threatened treaty action never betrayed the dignity of the directorate into clamor nor unseemly lamentation. Delegation after delegation, to be sure, besought and frequently received the benefit of royal influence and protection in the early history of the adventure, while in later times the best counselors of the United Kingdom fought its legal battles in court, parliament and forum, but from first to last the inner workings of the Company were consistently and carefully veiled in obscurity.

The meeting of the directors in the old Hudson Bay House on Fenchurch Street, London, were invariably conducted with the utmost secrecy and ceremony. The officers arrived and departed like conspirators and held their sessions in the semi-gloom which the few scattered candles could only accentuate. The solemnity and secrecy of these occasions was such that, as might be expected, Dame Rumor was soon busily spreading exaggerated and fanciful reports of the unknown events which took place behind the closed doors. These reports delivered in mysterious whispers and accompanied by significant shrugs of the shoulders generally referred to the enormous financial success of the adventure. Doubtless much of the secrecy was due to the weight of the

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responsibility which each of the directors felt in the gigantic undertaking, but also it was wise business policy.

Let us now look forward for a moment to a consideration of the results of the enterprise and learn if possible *why* the Company should maintain a dense cloud over its American dominions, and *why* any attempt to disperse the cloud and allow light to fall upon the mystery beneath should be met with serious obstacles and not infrequently with death. Let us take advantage of our privilege as narrators and peer for an instant through the obscurity which has hidden, as much as may be, the financial operations of this Company which have been conducted so quietly and shrewdly for two hundred and forty years.

The Company was originally capitalized for £10,500, and on this amount it admittedly earned 125% in the next twenty years; in 1690 the stock was trebled and thirty years later the directors were startled out of their habitual calm and caution by the general excitement attending the South Sea Bubble and the stock was again trebled; that this was not, however, an example of high finance is shown by the fact that they paid a 25% dividend on the trebled stock in the same year. From 1690 to 1800, a period of 110 years, the stock earned, according to the admission of Governor Pelly before a Legislative committee, from 60% to 70% a year, the stock being again trebled during this period and an increase of £9,450 added to the trebled amount. When we consider that these figures have been yielded up under extreme pressure by parties interested in their concealment, it is not probable that they are in any degree overstated, but rather the contrary.

According to Beckles Wilson, the value of the merchandise sent to the Bay in 1676 was £650 sterling, while the furs brought back sold for £19,000, a profit of nearly 3,000%. In 1748 the value of goods sent out amounted to £5,000 sterling, and the furs received in exchange

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sold in England for £30,000, or 600% profit; the profit in dull times according to the same authority being 40% on a paid up capital. From 1800 to 1821, owing to the competition of other companies, especially of its energetic and aggressive rival, the Northwest Company, the stock paid a trivial 4% for sixteen years and nothing at all for five years. This was the period, however, in which the company, constantly harried by its unrelenting opponent, expanded most broadly. It broke away from its traditional policy of keeping forts in the vicinity of the Great Bay only, and threw out a huge network of posts, that covered every important point on the principal trails and water courses of the Northwest.

In 1821 the Northwest Company was merged into the Hudson's Bay Company, and upon the new and enlarged capital of £400,000 they received an annual profit of £250,000.

With this knowledge we cannot wonder that the directors came and went with the stealthiness of thieves nor that they resented the attempts that were continually made to penetrate the gloom and obscurity in which they had carefully enveloped their activities in the adventurous, lawless and fascinating fur trade.

The executive staff of the Company, elected by the stockholders, consisted of the governor and seven directors, who ruled with an imperious hand over their more than kingly domain. They controlled the annual fur sales and apportioned the dividends, they established forts and appointed and removed governors, they made war and peace not only with "non-Christian people," as provided in the charter, but with their at least equally Christian competitors. They purchased ships and sent them laden with supplies annually to the shores of the Bay whence the cargoes were distributed to the interior.

Neither friend nor enemy succeeded in disturbing or altering their authority. Under their jealous eyes

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every detail of the adventure was industriously worked out.

The chief factors were directly responsible to the board, and were frequently ordered before it to explain or justify their actions and to receive the discipline which the board was not backward in applying. A most servile obedience was exacted at all times. The factors in turn were not unready to hand down the law with undiminished force to the Company's servants both within and without the fort. Dependent as they were for supplies upon the annual ship and exposed in the interval to manifold dangers, the little isolated garrisons were expected to possess a high degree of individual responsibility, together with a loyal subordination to the lawful head of the post. In each fort the ranks were kept with almost military precision from governor or chief factor through chief trader, clerk, apprentice clerk, postmaster and interpreters to laborers and Indians. The apprentice clerks were engaged for a period of five years which promised in from fifteen to twenty years to bring the apprentice to a clerkship with the munificent income of $200 per year. The first five years were invariably spent at a remote and desolate post where, cut off from home or kindred, he learned to look to the Company as a dog to his master. He thus became bound to the Company for life, since other avenues of business were effectually closed to him, and progress was possible only along the line of Company promotion, which involved a lifetime. He embarked upon a career in which his position was as definitely ordained, his course as perfectly controlled and his escape as improbable as if he belonged to a sodality of feudal knights or had membership in a religious brotherhood. The personnel of the forts was recruited almost entirely from the Highlands of Scotland and the Orkney Isles and therein the Company showed great business acumen, since by nature, education and early environment they possessed the taciturnity, the thrift, the love for solitude and wildness, the simplicity and sturdiness of character

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which eminently fitted them for the arduous and lonesome life which they were called upon to endure. They dwelt in the grim and grinding wilderness inhabited by savage beasts and still more savage men, and against such adversaries they were expected to hazard their lives in ceaseless warfare to wring out profits for the Company. As they were liable to be sent at a moment's notice from the Atlantic to the Pacific, they were expected to be self-reliant and resolute in the presence of danger to themselves or to the property in their charge and keep friendly with a notoriously uncertain and childish people. The spirit of monopoly, the golden character of silence, the need of being secretive and uncommunicative, was instilled into every clerk, trapper and trader. At length after thirty-five or forty years of faithful service, the clerk became a factor, and as factor he secured command of a post, be it on the Arctic shore, on the plains of Assiniboia, or beside a rushing stream that forms a highway to the St. Lawrence, to the Pacific or to Hudson Bay, the command was his and he ruled like a proconsul over an immense territory interlaced with trails and waterways and inhabited by barbarous tribes. Surrounded by his Indian vassalage, and in the company of one or two white men, the factor lived his life until such time as his length of service permitted him to retire on a pension and return to his native land.

On a little knoll, a hundred yards or so from the water, stands the factor's house, and arranged in the form of a square are the other buildings of the post, consisting of the general store, the warehouse, the blacksmith shop, the canoe house and the carpenter shop, all of which in the olden time were surrounded by high, pointed and not-easily-to-be-scaled palisades, dominated by a great flag staff in the midst of the square, from the top of which for honored guest or festal day the banner of the Company waved its lazy folds over a strange and heterogenous population. The close relationship of the

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Crown and Company was shown on the crimson field where the Union Jack and the initials of the great company occupy adjoining but diagonal quadrants.

The life at the forts became a routine like a frontier army post. In winter snowshoeing, trapping and hunting could be made incidental to supplying the factory with fresh meat, while the evenings were spent in chess, backgammon and whist when players enough could be obtained. In summer canoe sailing and dog racing were cherished sports, but the great event of the year was the arrival or departure of the brigade. This was the fleet of three or four "North canoes," each manned by eight men and all under the guidance of a conductor. The brigades took out the fur from the fort and brought back supplies from the coast, a journey that sometimes required two years for its completion. The "North canoes" had skillful men in bow and stern at double the wages of the rest, who were responsible for the canoe and its contents to the conductor of the brigade or to the head of the expedition when two or more brigades traveled in company. The freight of these canoes would consist of sixty pieces or packages of merchandise weighing from 90 to 100 pounds each, together with provisions to the amount of 1,000 pounds. Added to this was the weight of eight men and the 40 pounds of "duffle" or personal baggage which each was allowed to carry, and the whole weight would, therefore, exceed 8,000 pounds, or possibly four tons as an average. When the brigade arrived or departed all was excitement since it brought the isolated post into touch with the great world without and would bring back from the coast a fund of new experiences for winter's consumption. Sometimes on the return of the brigade there would be found a file of newspapers a year old and these would be opened day by day on the corresponding date and the world's news of the previous year eagerly followed. Thus each lonely post constituted an oasis of civilization in the midst of the wilderness, a per-

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ipheral ganglion in more or less close communication with the central nervous system.

That the mind was not always satisfied nor the emotions benumbed by this primitive existence to the degree desired by the Company, and that the factor many times repented his contract, may be learned from the story of McLean, who was forty years in the service; he says:

"The history of my career may serve as a warning to those who may be disposed to enter the Hudson Bay Company's service. They may learn that from the moment they embark in the Company's canoes at Lachine or in their ships at Gravesend, they bid adieu to all that civilized man most values on earth. They bid adieu to their families and friends, probably forever, for if they remain long enough to attain the promotion that allows them the privilege of revisiting their native land (twenty or twenty-five years), what changes does not this life exhibit in a much shorter time? They bid adieu to all the comforts and conveniences of civilization to vegetate at some solitary post, hundreds of miles perhaps from any other human habitation, save the wigwam of the savage, without any society other than that of their own thoughts or of the two or three humble persons who share their exile. They bid adieu to all refinement and cultivation, not infrequently becoming semi-barbarians, so altered in habits and sentiments, that they not only become attached to savage life, but lose all relish for any other." Thus the white man.

The reaction of the Indian to his environment is no less interesting than its effect upon the Anglo-Saxon. In each race special qualities were developed according to the needs of the Company.

The tradition of the Company was to keep the Indian a hunter. There was never any effort wasted in encouraging the native to agriculture or any industry. Tribal strife also was frowned upon since it prevented hunting and trapping and therefore interfered with the interests

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of the Company, and no Indian uprising has ever marred the long suzerainty. "To make a good collection of fur was the chief aim; for this the Indian required no education, for this the wandering habit needed to be cultivated rather than discouraged, and for this it was well to have the home ties as brittle as possible, hence the teepee and the tent were favored for the Indian hunter rather than the permanent camp or the log house." Originally of a more pacific and docile nature than the fierce tribes farther south, they soon lost their initative and became employes and dependents of the Company.

To stand well with the Company became not only a desirable thing among the natives on account of the rewards it produced, but it became essential to the preservation of life, for the old arts were forgotten in the use of the new facilities furnished by the post. The system worked admirably. The hunter was given credit by the factor for about $150.00 worth of goods, and woe betide him if he did not return at the end of the season with fur enough to cancel the indebtedness. In case of accident or a run of hard luck, provided he bore a good reputation, he would be staked again, but otherwise he could secure no more supplies until his obligation had been taken up or vouched for by some compassionate relative; neither would it avail to go to another post, for he would find his reputation there ahead of him.

Occasionally an Indian vassal feels that he has been unjustly treated, and filled with his sense of injury, he will march off indignantly at the head of his family and attach himself to an adjacent post, hoping thereby to injure his former factor. In the great North-land all roads that carry furs lead to Hudson Bay, so that from the Company's standpoint the Indian is welcome to live near any post provided only that he brings in *fur*. When the furs are in the hands of the Indian, the Company will do the rest. The great seal of the Company bears the motto "pro pelle cutem" or "skin for skin," a

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phrase which has been variously interpreted by those most interested.

The price charged the Indians for goods has always been as large as the amount paid for furs has been small, but this is the rule always where, with ostentatious righteousness, the white man takes up his burden at the expense of the unwilling native, or in the guise of trade with the ignorant or dependent tribes whom he benevolently chooses to civilize.

Having secured his goods, mended the canoes and bade farewell to his friends, the Indian starts with his family in the late fall for the hunting grounds. "Day after day they labor with paddle or tracking line, pole or tump strap, or occasionally spreading their blankets as sails to a favorable breeze. They live on the country through which they travel, snow flurries come and go, ice forms and thaws, dry leaves rustle upon the floor of the forest. The weather is cold and exhilarating, days of glorious sunshine and nights of hard frost." Their way takes them over portages that lead across steep and rocky hills, through wild gorges and over rank muskegs. Along beautiful little streams and tranquil lakes they drive their canoes swiftly to the rhythm of paddle handles bumping on the gunwales and to the music of blades that swish through swirling waters, leaving little gurgling wakes. They glide on beneath overhanging trees, past a moose trodden beach or a bear trampled bank. Down wild rapids, across foaming eddies, through endless forests of conifer and birch they sweep with the current as through a canyon deeply carved of malachite and marble. Through this enchanting panorama they speed to the end of their voyage; doubtless to a point where a little river breaks the shore of a lonely lake, where furtive shapes steal silently to drink and phantom hunters roam n birch and cedar solitudes. Here with long spruce saplings they frame the winter home, covering the naked poles with birch bark or animal skins, and warming the

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teepee, as it is now called, by means of a little conical fire within. The grim North-land winter is spent in hunting, trapping and curing the skins, until the groans of the ice-covered streams and the lisp of the snow-mantled firs inform the hunter that spring is at hand and the way to the post open. In response to these airy summons the canoes are loaded down with the pelts of beaver and bear, lynx and martin and other denizens of the wilderness; the covering is removed from the teepee, the spruce poles are left standing like a naked skeleton, and are quickly lost to view as the Indian swings into the icy stream and starts back to the post. When the season has been good and the hunter fortunate, he will bring in from $300 to $600 worth of furs, and he feels more than ever the magic of spring as he paddles lightheartedly down the river to his summer camp.

The method of trade with the Indians was developed as early as 1690 and has been reduced to a science. The tribes brought down their skins to the post and delivered them through a small aperture in the side of the storehouse. They entered the stockade three or four at a time and traded one by one at the window over which the chief trader presided. The actual dealing with the natives was restricted to the two officials known as traders and none of the Company's other servants was permitted to deal with them except on rare occasions. The trade was necessarily carried on mostly during the summer when the rivers were free from ice, but sometimes when the hunting ground was near the post the Indians would come in during the winter with snowshoes and dog sleds. When the Indian was dissatisfied with the price offered for his furs, they were passed back to him, no compulsion ostensibly was employed, he might either keep his skins or starve, for the trader knew that the struggles of the Indian were in vain and like a charmed bird he must ultimately drop into the always open maw of the Company.

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The furs were weighed on a long-armed balance such as even yet may be seen at the Astor House at Mackinac by those who visit the Old Post. The visitor there may also see an old iron press which was used in binding down the pelts into packs of 40 to 100 pounds each, for convenient management in the brigades of canoes which once a year carried the spoil of the forests and the streams to the coast and returned laden with supplies from the ships.

The Indian received a wooden peg for each "castor" in value of his winter catch—the "castor" or "made beaver" being the medium of exchange and valued at one to two shillings per pound. The beaver, which was most sought for originally, is now almost as extinct as the buffalo and its place had been taken by the marten.

The thought instinctively arises that the Company took a great risk in thus trusting the native sense of honor in giving credit for the year's supplies, but it was very rare for the Indian to fail to appear, and only did he fail when very unusual obstacles were encountered. When he did not return to the post, but disposed of his furs to the free trader or a rival company, a detail of two or three of his tribe were sent after him with instructions not to return without bringing him back for judgment. Eight months or a year might possibly elapse before he was traced to his remote retreat in the bush, but eventually he or his scalp was surely brought in by his haggard and wayworn captors.

The Indians, always the most numerous of the Company's servants, lost much of their importance in course of time. The employes of the Company were originally Indians and Highland Scotch, but lured by the love of adventure and the "bright face of danger," gradually there crept in from the south the *voyageurs*, *coureurs de bois* and half-breeds from the French settlements in Lower Canada, who took to the wild life with the utmost avidity and combined the skill and woodcraft of the

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Indian with the happy, dashing and debonair ways of the French. The "half-breeds" constitute at present a very important part of the Canadian population and deserve some reference to their origin.

From the very first it had been customary among the English employes, and is yet for that matter, to take what was called a "country wife" from among the tribes around the fort, and when the trader left the country he always made provision for the support of his "country wife" and the invariably numerous family. These marriages between the whites and the natives were so common and so fruitful that sometimes in later years the entire summer population around the fort could with difficulty show a single full blood Indian, and some entire tribes at present can show no single individual of pure descent.

There is an account in Irving's Astoria of one of these marriages where the diplomatic McDougall, a chief factor, thinking to improve his business by means of an Indian alliance, conceived the idea of seeking the hand of a native princess, the daughter of the one-eyed Comcomly who held sway over the fishing tribe of the Chinooks. "By conference after conference and multiple negotiations the preliminaries were at length settled and the chief promised to bring to the fort his daughter, who is represented as having one of the flattest and most aristocratic heads in the tribe. The worthy sachem landed in princely style, arrayed in a bright blue blanket and a red breech clout, with an extra quantity of paint and feathers, and attended by a train of half-naked warriors and nobles. A horse was in waiting for the princess and mounting her behind one of the clerks she was conveyed, coy but compliant, to the fortress where she was received with devout, though decent, joy by her expectant bridegroom. Her bridal adornments, it is true, at first caused some little dismay for she had painted and anointed herself for the occasion according to the Chinook custom.

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However, by generous use of soap and water, she was freed from all adventitious tint and fragrance and entered into the nuptial state the cleanest princess that had ever been known among the somewhat unctuous tribe of the Chinooks."

When a particularly punctilious factor could not bring himself to consider a native marriage in this fashion and his long absence from home had obliterated the memory of his earlier sweethearts, he took refuge in that ever present caterer to all the necessities of life and ordered a wife from the Company with less concern than he would order a new axe. In one instance the safe arrival of the wife thus ordered was acknowledged as follows: "Received, one wife in fair condition; hope she will prove good, though she is certainly a rum one to look at."

The usual method of securing a wife was much more summary and far less ceremonious. A few insignificant presents were given in exchange and the native parent at once became the proud and morganatic father-in-law. As a result of this custom the number of half-breeds, both French and English, rapidly increased. These people possessed the fierceness of their Indian mothers, together with the high intelligence and capacity for affairs of their white sires and for many years worked admirably into the pattern of the Company. Eventually however they wearied of the exactions and impositions, and in a later movement of this drama we shall meet them again burning with indignation against the Company. The Indians in the meantime were subjected for decade after decade to unceasing pressure and discipline that gradually weeded out the old ideas and habits. The characters that would not mold went down and a distinctive individual grew up that was known as the "Hudson Bay Indian," an individual that possessed in a remarkable degree, the highly essential quality of woodcraft, together with a docility, a reliability, and a sense of duty that made him absolutely irreplaceable.

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Until the arrival of the missionary, the trend of Indian character was quite steadily upward in all those qualities that make him a steady and efficient fur collector. Considering the conditions and the general attitude of the Company, it is hardly surprising that, in spite of the terms of the charter, so many difficulties were placed in the way of the missionary, whom pressure from home eventually compelled the Company to receive. This opposition to the missionaries is said to have inspired the remark that the initials H.B.C., that appear in the lower and outer quarter of the far-flung banner of the Company, should signify "Here before Christ."

It has been claimed since, as a proof of their Christian character, that the Indians rarely murder, and that large crimes are uncommon, but so it was, except in warfare, before the missionary arrived, and since then the Indian, sure of absolution, has become a sneak and a hypocrite, and does not hesitate to commit theft and many other small crimes. The effect produced by two missions, such as the Catholic Church and Church of England, when they were located at the same post, was always subversive.

The missionaries at any rate have always earnestly and unitedly opposed the use of whisky in the fur trade. The Company also denounced the custom in public with much noise, but secretly it connived at the distribution of whisky by its servants. This fact is frankly admitted by every chief factor who has left records of his stewardship. It certainly was freely used during the great rivalry of the companies, and it is quite believable that earlier and even in later times these shrewd traders never lost a pelt for lack of a drink of whisky. It is largely true at present that the Indian cannot obtain whisky from the posts, and while this is pointed out as a virtue, it may be added that in this respect the Company is only obeying a stringent law of the Dominion which forbids the sale of liquor by any-

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body to the Indians. Neither the missionary nor the Company ever in any degree influenced the Indian in this respect; the only way to secure abstinence was the total deprivation which the Dominion enforced. The missionary work has progressed quite rapidly since 1850, and now the natives about Hudson Bay, Lake Winnipeg, on the Mackenzie River, throughout British Columbia and on the great savannahs of Assiniboia are largely Christianized. The missionaries also, as the Company feared, became a means for the distribution of information from the interior. With the knowledge of the abundant returns that any one could secure in the fur trade, it is not surprising that opposition to the grasping monopoly should arise and many, either as individuals or as companies, attempted to share in the rich spoil of the Hudson Bay Territory.

Bryce states that there are frequent allusions in the minutes of the Company during the first fifty years of its existence to the arrest and punishment even of servants and employes who secreted valuable furs on their homeward voyage for the purpose of disposing of them.

Until the last thirty-five years moreover the Company maintained its privileges, with the greatest firmness and success. For over a hundred years from its origin, that is, until the formation of the Northwest Company, no rivalry worthy of the name arose to cause annoyance, and in consequence the forts still remained in close proximity to Hudson Bay to which the natives for hundreds of miles east, west, north and south would repair for trade. Ship after ship laden with priceless furs drove steadily eastward and from the public sales a golden stream flowed steadily into the coffers of the Company. We can easily imagine the great concern of the stockholders in the olden days upon the arrival at Gravesend of the annual packet, freighted with fruits of the adventure, and the pleasant reaction when the treasure was removed from the great hold of the ship, and piled high

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in the spacious warehouses of the Company, there to await a favorable time for sale at public auction. It was at Gravesend, also that the outward bound ships were piled deep with muzzle-loading fowling pieces and ammunition, with brass kettles, knives, hatchets, tobacco, glass beads, flints, mirrors and red lead, and thence they sailed regularly, about the first of June, and were not heard from again until October.

When the ships arrived at the Bay, the forts were visited in turn, their stores replenished, and their furs taken on board. Each fort was charged with the goods delivered and credited with commodities returned, all in "castors" or "made beaver" skins. For many years, this simple method was sufficient, but when competition arose and the forts spread to the heads of the rivers, to the interior, and to the passes in the mountains, it became necessary to make up the supplies for the different forts and send them by paddle and portage to the many dependent posts, hundreds or even thousands of miles in the "hinterland," and the discipline of the Company was so excellent and so exacting that to this day the evidence of a successful trip in the great Canadian wilderness in the mind of the Indian guide is, when he can say to his employer that the journey has been made "without breaking a canoe or losing a pack."

Besides preserving in the utmost secrecy the true nature of its possessions, the Company actively proclaimed the adverse and repellent story that the entire domain was a vast and desolate waste frozen by the icy blasts of winter, covered by snow, devoid of food and shelter, forbidding in aspect, the soil rocky and sterile, and inhabited only by ferocious beasts and not less savage Indians. Everywhere are found allusions to the dreadful dangers and hazards to life which the traveler encounters who ventures into this menacing domain. Traveling was made difficult, and the presence of strangers was a source of irritation and resentment. The "free trader,"

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that knight errant of the forests, was constantly exposed to the Company's displeasure, for trading in the territory as we have seen was absolutely forbidden, and the "free trader" intercepted the natives on the journey to the fort and secured the precious furs. Many devices were employed to deter, circumvent, or destroy him. By one method a couple of Indians were put upon his trail to keep him moving and to warn off the natives from commerce with him. They interfered with his food supply, broke his traps, crept up and destroyed his snowshoes, and stole or killed his sled dogs. In the end he left the country or starved, resistance being immediately fatal. Or, again, he was captured and brought to the post, and compelled to promise to leave the country forever, his return being equivalent to a death sentence. Occasionally, he would be conveyed fifty or a hundred miles from the post under guard, and then released with a few ounces of pemmican, his gun and two loads of ammunition. Thus "without the shedding of blood" many a trader has been sent on "la longue traverse," as it was named, but only a few ever lived to reach the settlement. It has happened also that the persistent "free trader" never returned to his home and later his bones might be found whitening near the site of his little camp. Accidents are sudden, fatalities are not investigated, and death ever stalks in the wake of adventure. Many might suspect, but none ever knew what mysterious agency had caused his death.

But the methods employed against "free traders" singly were powerless against them in combination.

Far to the south where the mighty St. Lawrence boils in fury among the sunken rocks the city of Montreal was slowly assuming a dominent place, and from this stronghold in the south an aggressive and persistent foe began to percolate through the rivers, lakes and meandering streams and through the pathless forests, to demand battle from these "Lords of the North." Duluth

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had explored the north shore of Lake Superior and traded with the Indians around Lake Nepigon. Verandrye, and his sons still in search of the elusive Northwest Passage, this time by way of the Great Lakes, had pushed up through the Rainy Lake and River, to Lake of the Woods and thence on to Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan, their hearts beating high with hope as expanse after expanse of water stretched out before them until they faced defeat and death at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

With the capture of Quebec by Wolfe in 1759 the English were left in sole and undisputed possession of the North country, and first Alexander Henry and afterward Finlay began to trade in the Lake Superior region. Following them came Frobisher, Cadot, Pangman, McTavish, Mackenzie, and other "free traders," who a few years after (1783-4) combined their efforts under the name of the Northwest Company with headquarters at Montreal. With the appearance of this determined foe, an astonishing activity began in exploration and in opening up new avenues for trade. Except for the ill-fated voyage of the "Albany" and the "Discovery" shortly after the granting of the charter, no attempt had been made by the Company to discover the Northwest Passage according to the terms of the grant, until goaded and shamed by enemies at home the notable expedition of Hearne was sent out in 1769, resulting in the discovery and survey of the Coppermine River.

In 1789, five years after the formation of the Northwest Company, Mackenzie, one of the enterprising partners, pushed north from the "Northwester's" fort on Lake Atabasca, entered Great Bear Lake, and thence passed down to the Arctic Ocean by the river which now bears his name.

The old Company was then in a position where surrender or war to the knife were the only alternatives. It chose the latter, and stretching out its arms from the

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forts on Hudson Bay it began to parallel the aggressive actions of the Northwest Company and planted fort after fort along the great trails and water highways of the vast interior, from the Frozen Ocean to sources of the Mississippi and from Hudson's Bay to the waters of the Western Sea. Many bloody battles were fought between the employes of the rival companies whose forts frequently were located not more than two hundred yards apart. Meanwhile in England the officers of the Company whom Lord Bolingbroke, pestered to madness, had called the "smug and ancient gentlemen," brought every influence to bear at court to secure aid in the maintenance of the monopoly and assistance in preventing its infringement.

Spurred into action by the ceaseless activity and encroachment of its great rival, the Company now shook off the sloth of a hundred years during which abundant dividends had checked the ambition and restrained the imagination of the men at the head of affairs, and for the first time made bold and vigorous war for the retention of its inheritance. The deeds of audacity and valor, of fortitude and unwearied endeavor which were performed by the rivals during the next thirty years will always live among the most thrilling adventures that ever graced the romantic and enthralling pages of history, and might well take rank with the strenuous deeds of the old Homeric era.

During this short period Mackenzie finally succeeded after incredible hardships in crossing the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific shore (1793). Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific by way of Columbia (1805), Simon Frazer discovered and explored the river that bears his name and also reached the Pacific (1808). David Thompson by way of the Saskatchewan and Columbia and the Astorians by the overland route, both reached the Pacific in the same year (1811). These hardy and adventurous spirits have all left chronicles of their exploits that are well worth perusal. Absorbing as fiction and fascinating

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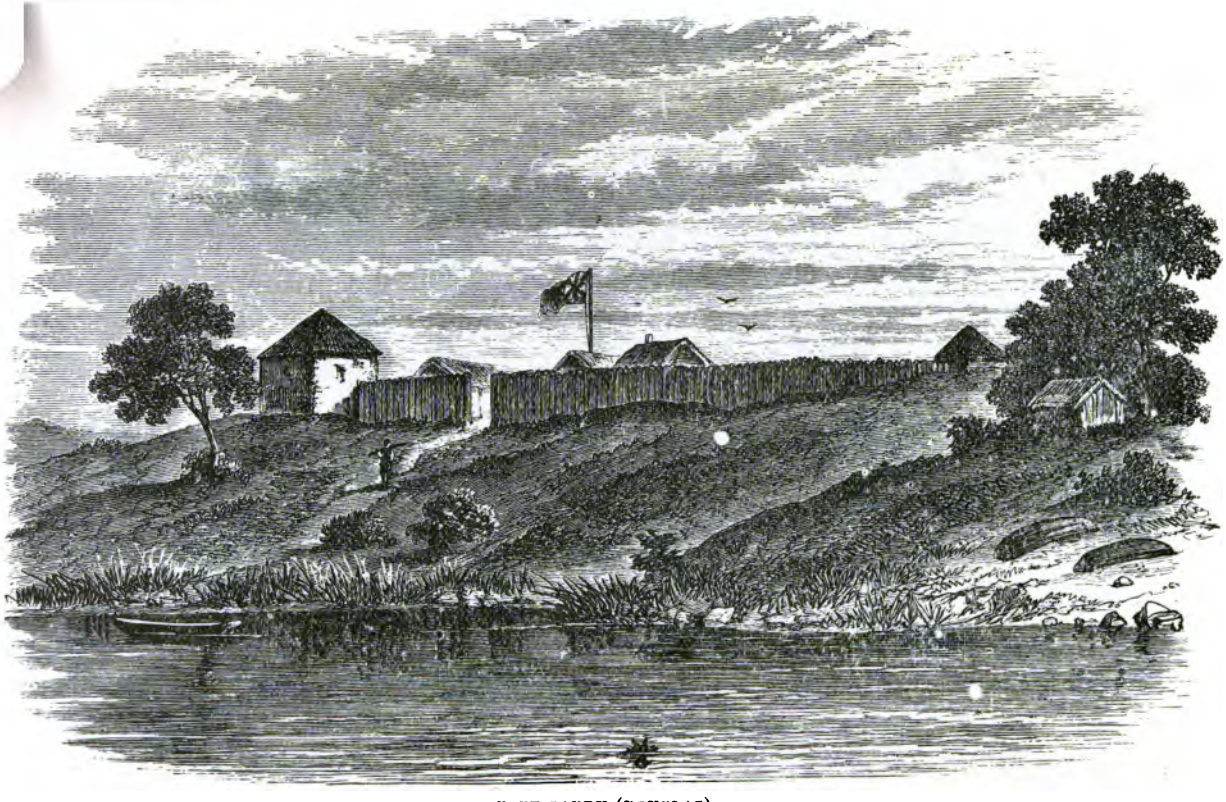

FORT GARRY (DOUGLAS).

It was from this Fort that Governor Semple went out to his death at the Massacre of Seven Oaks

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by reason of the romantic associations, the career of each stands boldly forth and challenges our admiration as an epic of human endeavor.

Chains of forts were interwoven in a vast web across the face of the Northland, the game was wantonly destroyed, and only the Indians thrived while the giants cast dice with fate.

In 1816 the great rivals had absorbed or ruined eleven other partnerships and were themselves on the verge of destruction from the force and fury of their long and sanguinary battle. Affairs then culminated in the massacre of Governor Semple of the Hudson's Bay Company with twenty of his followers by the half-breeds and Indians in the service of the Northwest Company. This occurred at Seven Oaks in the midst of the harassed Red River settlement. Both companies recoiled in horror from this deed. Both now recognized that a treaty or compromise in some form was absolutely imperative. Happily a truce was arranged through the intervention of the Honorable Edward Ellice and then in 1821 the Northwest Company was absorbed and the united interests were placed under the management of Governor Simpson, one of the great men of the Hudson's Bay Company. The old corporation again found itself in full and complete control. By this merger the Company was provided with a vastly increased number of men and forts and every facility for the pursuit of trade. By combining the influence of the old and new, they again secured legal recognition of their monopoly of the fur trade, not only over the region of Hudson Bay which they already owned, but also over the entire Pacific and Arctic watersheds.

A period of prosperity and romantic adventure followed. On the western shore of Lake Superior, thirty miles north of the international boundary line, was located Fort William, the principal post of the confederated companies, and every year the chief factors and

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chief traders from all the interior forts repaired thither to meet in general council the partners from Montreal. These expeditions were conducted with much ceremony and resembled the progress of a Highland chieftain with his numerous, if ragged, retinue.

No great ostentation was possible; no glitter and sheen save that of their weapons and paddles; no flaunting *guidon* save only the banner of the Company; no flourish of music save only the human voice signalized the rapid march of these dour potentates of the wilderness. Yet even with scanty accessories the half-breeds and Indians through temperament and instinct were enabled to create a dashing and dramatic appearance.

Thus from the forts of the remote Pacific to the shores of Hudson Bay, from the eternal ice of the North where the Dance of the Dead Men sheds a fitful light upon the long Arctic night, to the tumultuous floods of the St. Lawrence, brigades of canoes might be seen in the spring of the year converging toward the blue and icy waters of the Great Lake. The high spirits of the voyageurs kept the paddles flashing merrily and while the forests resounded with such songs as "*Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre*" and "*A la Claire Fontaine*," the hardy canoe men would run the rapids or track the canoes up the swift waters.

With packs ranging from one hundred to three hundred pounds suspended by head-strap, or tump-line, they would run the portages with zeal and good natured rivalry. With a hundred and fifty pounds they would traverse a nine-mile portage and return in six hours. When the brigades arrived within a few hours of a post they camped until early the following morning, and then dressing in their most picturesque apparel with gaudy feathers and ribbons streaming from caps and garters and singing their most rollicking song, they put the utmost vigor of their sinewy arms into the bending paddles and swept madly down upon the post. They arrived at

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the landing with speed unchecked and while the spectator held his breath in anticipation of seeing them dashed to pieces, the canoe in mid career was brought to a full stop in the space of a few inches by a powerful and united back stroke. Here discipline was relaxed, drinking was the order of the day, and even the lordly partners, their business council concluded, entered upon such enthusiastic and uproarious revels that their occasional echoes still rebound from the cliffs and heights of Thunder Bay to far distant Montreal.

In considering the decline of the "Great Company," one has only to contemplate the slow decay of a romantic ideal fraught with high and adventurous possibilities and the ultimate lapse into a crass commercialism. In this chronicle there is no opportunity to exhibit magnificent buildings ornamented with a wealth of architecture nor innumerable armies winning great victories, neither gorgeous decorations nor oriental splendor, but the attention must be directed to a supreme creation of nature decorated with boundless forests and limitless plains, upon whose vast expanse mighty rivers and magnificent lakes have been poured with a prodigal hand and in whose very midst man, uninspired man, has toiled and moiled has wrought and riven and has done his deathless deeds in the solitude and in the silence, unheralded and unseen, in true heroic measure.

In the last chapter, it is necessary to trace the decline of the romance, the elision of the poetry, the removal of the glamor which the dauntless deeds of the woodsmen in their picturesque environment have hung like halos over the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company. To the illumined mind a dim and vapory nimbus still lingers hauntingly over these historic spots, but in the very fullness of fruition the disintegration of the Company's career was begun. For forty years it continued at the very zenith of its glory, the woods were filled with the voyageurs, ships came and went bearing supplies and

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pelts, over 150,000 Indians spent their laborious lives in gleaning the wealth of the forests and streams, and over 3,000 employes took charge of the commodities from the sale of which over 60% profit was annually distributed as dividends.

Vigilantly the governor kept watch and ward over its rights and privileges and the pressure exercised by his fine machiavellian fingers was felt by the American commissioners at every stage of the negotiation of the Oregon Treaty, which involved the forts on the Columbia River as well as the Island of Vancouver. The Canadian Pacific grant found secret but obstinate opposition from the same source. Meanwhile knowledge of the great wealth in the interior spread farther and farther and more frequent and more determined attempts were made to penetrate the rigid barricade. More numerous and more extensive breaches were made in the Company's defenses by rivals and free traders, but they were superficial and trivial. In the bold and aggressive exterior there was not the slightest sign to mark the real and vital danger which existed inside. For a hundred and fifty years the Company had successfully beaten off the only enemy capable of destroying its splendid organization. A change occurred; a strong man appeared with a fixed idea, the opposition was overcome and the colonization long repelled was immediately inaugurated. One is not greatly astonished to learn that the man who innocently and benevolently produced the conditions that were to reduce the Company to an allotropic form was a man who stood high in the councils of the directory.

When the poor peasants were expelled from the Highland glens and crofts of Kildonan in order that the proprietors might secure game preserves, the philanthropic Earl of Selkirk, who owned nearly one-third of the stock of the Company, conceived the plan that these people might be transferred to the boundless plains of

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the fertile but undeveloped regions around Lake Winnipeg. Through his connection with the Company, he was able to purchase 110,000 square miles of land which surrounded the junction of the Assiniboia and Red Rivers. In 1811 his first colony of seventy people arrived in three vessels at Fort York, but so late in the season that it was impossible to complete the journey. Wintering at Fort York, they started in the spring on their long and toilsome trip by river and portage, up rocky ascents, over perilous passes and across a three hundred mile expanse of open lake, and at last arrived at their destination, which was soon called Fort Garry, and afterward became the present city of Winnipeg.

The Company used this event in later years to prove that it favored colonization, but this was solely for argument since it not only did not aid and was in no way responsible for the colonization, but consistently and steadfastly opposed the Selkirk settlement and continually placed obstacles in the way of its success. The men at Fort Garry were joined by other colonists during the next three years, until they numbered two hundred and eighty. For fifteen years, however, it was an open question whether the colony would survive or perish.

Surrounded by Indians, wild beasts and other strange dangers, combating extreme drouths and most unusual floods, intense heat and extreme cold, plagues of grasshoppers and crop failures, they surmounted all only to be nearly swept out of existence by the warfare of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwesters, wherein the site of the colony was persistently used as a battleground.

The export of the products of the colony, such as buffalo tallow, was hindered and even prevented. The settler could not engage in the fur trade without forfeiting his lands; enormous and prohibitive tariffs were charged on freights to be exported through the Company's stores on Hudson Bay. The irritation produced by these methods and the resentment felt toward the

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Company steadily increased. At St. Paul, where the settlers secured supplies and a trade outlet, their irritation was commended and their resentment craftily inflamed. The efforts of the Company were constantly exerted to hold the lid on the boiling Red River colony and to prevent further invasion.

For a time submission was the rule, and then the French and English half-breeds, headed by Isbister, forwarded a long memorial to the secretary for the colonies setting forth their grievances, the controversy waxed fierce and the troubles became acute. A French settler bought goods intending to start a trading expedition to Lake Manitoba. The Company arrested, imprisoned him and confiscated his goods, according to its custom. Hundreds of half-breeds poured into the settlement and under Louis Riel, the father, the prisoner was rescued. Five years later a petition signed by six hundred half-breeds reciting grievances and requesting legislative instruction was presented to the Assembly of Canada. Unrest, continual disorder, and growing strength of the colony, marked the next ten years. In 1857 the Toronto Board of Trade petitioned the Assembly to open up the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company to trade.

In 1857 also Chief Justice Draper appeared as representative of Canadian interest before a committee of the House of Commons, and in consequence Vancouver Island, which the Company held under a twenty-one years' lease was squeezed out of its grasp. The report of the proceedings is most interesting and the fence between witness and counsel has not been excelled in any later proceedings.

This was a period of great anxiety to the Company and justly so for the end was most surely approaching. Next we learn in 1862 that Governor Berens, old and obstinate, the last of the "smug and ancient gentlemen," was approached, and ultimately induced to sell outright to a Canadian syndicate with modern ideas, the rights of

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the Company in Canada for $7,500,000. Great alarm and indignation were produced by this astonishing act among the chief factors and chief traders who had been regarded as having some partnership rights in the Great Company according to the plans of union in 1821. However, they were bought off, pensioned and placated. The new partners now began a clever warfare against yielding up any of the Company's vested rights, and for ten years they kept up a brave fight against their impending and inevitable fate. The newspapers were utilized and social and financial pressure was brought to bear on the Legislative Assembly, and on the House of Commons. Money was poured forth in great abundance, and every device was employed that the greatest and most ingenious legal talent could suggest to avoid the surrender of its monopoly, but the times had changed and the ten years' effort was all in vain.

The confederation movement had widened the horizon of Canadian public men. In 1867, the year of confederation, the Honorable William McDougall moved in the Dominion Parliament a series of resolutions which showed the advantages both to Canada and to the Empire, of the Dominion being extended to the Pacific. He showed that settlement, commerce, and the development of the resources of a country are dependent upon a stable government; that the welfare of the Red River settlers would be enhanced; that provision was contained in the British North American Act for the admission of Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territory to the Dominion; that this wide country should be united to Canada; that in case of union the rights of any corporation, as the Hudson's Bay, association or individual, should be respected; that this should be settled judicially or by agreement; that the Indian title should be extinguished, and that an address should be made to Her Majesty to this effect.

The resolutions were passed by a large majority of

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the House. The Company, driven to the wall, made a determined stand for terms. The Imperial Government insisted that the resolutions should prevail, and also insisted that the Company should demand only reasonable compensation. It was finally agreed that the Company should relinquish all rights in Rupert's Land and Northwest Territory; that Canada should pay to the Company $1,500,000; that the Company should retain blocks of land around the posts which amounted to about 50,000 acres; (a most valuable concession since the posts were always most favorably placed); and that the Company be given outright one-twentieth of all the arable land of the relinquished territory, namely, the eighth and twenty-sixth square miles of every township, that the rights of half-breeds and Indians should be respected, and that the Company should be allowed every privilege in carrying on trade as a regular trading company. In 1870, just 200 years from the granting of the charter, the Imperial Decree was passed, and the Hudson's Bay Company, whose word had been law over 3,000,000 square miles of territory, subsided into a simple trading company in the Dominion of Canada.

The transfer, however, did not take place without disturbance for the restive half-breeds of the Red River country, fearing that their rights would not be respected, and aided and abetted, as many believed, by disappointed and rebellious factors in the Company's service, entered upon an armed rebellion under Louis Riel, the son, and the old fur route from Fort William, where the life of the Company had pulsed for years, now felt keenly conscious of the changed conditions when Colonel Wolseley and his men traversed the waters of Rainy River and Lake, Lake of the Woods, and Lake Winnipeg, and landed at Fort Garry, the seat of an insurrection which promptly subsided on the appearance of the troops. Since the surrender of its charter, thirty-eight years have slipped away, during which the Company has continued its fur

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trade, but the forts have changed; the stockades have been taken down; the Indian now is permitted to approach and even to enter the sacred precincts of the factor's residence; the posts are gradually withdrawn as the country settles up, and at the headquarters in Winnipeg, where its downfall began, the Company, *miserabile dictu*, has a large mail order house, and from this point also it conducts its immense land business which promises to develop almost fabulous returns.

In 1890 the lands then surveyed, which were set aside for the Company, amounted to 7,000,000 acres, which were valued at $20,000,000, and every year sees accretions to the amount of territory as the survey of the Dominion proceeds, and every year the land increases in value and adds a potent increment to the already bursting vaults of the Company. More fortunate than the East India Company, whose rapacity compelled the Government to deprive it of its prey, we find the Hudson's Bay Company in secure, peaceful and legal possession of an endless flow of gold.

Thus we have witnessed the felicitous birth of the "Great Company," surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of royalty; we have seen its adventurous youth gradually merge into a robust and turbulent manhood against which none could prevail. With the approach of age the reins of power have been torn from those mighty hands, but in the midst of all the luxury that enormous wealth can supply and undisturbed by the tumult and the clamor, the lean and slippered pantaloon sees in dreamy retrospect the warfare and the conquests of the centuries, and views with filmy eye the slow procession of the years. Yet not in vain has the Company lived and not without gratitude should it pass away. In spite of many shortcomings and selfish ambitions, the Company must be recognized as a powerful factor in the development of the New World.

As the search for gold in 1849 opened our great

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western lands to settlement, as the search for Sir John Franklin resulted in an accurate survey of 6,000 miles of Arctic coast, so the search for a Northwest Passage has developed the fur trade, the pursuit of which has opened up to civilization and prosperity the immense territories of the Northland. But the Day of Destiny is close at hand; the fur and the forests in one involving ruin are doomed to disappear; the age of wheat and the settler looms large upon the horizon; railroads begin to penetrate the Dominion in the wake of the vanished fur brigades; the play is done; the curtain descends.

The forts of the Company still dot the vast solitudes where fish and game abound, and veteran factors, grizzled in the service, extend a generous hospitality to those who thread the devious trails of the silent and brooding North, a hospitality so cordial that it would be deplorable to conclude without a word of tribute.

Who can forget the delightful thrills of interest and anticipation when first the fort bursts into view? How quickly the tired arms receive new vigor! How eagerly the excited paddle dips the swirling waters! Who can fail to recall the laggard and reluctant departure in the early dawn, as the sun streams over the edge of the forest and bathes in crimson glory the gently sinuous folds of the flag? Then quietly comes the factor down to the landing with messages for the next post, and a packet of letters for civilization. How carefully he repeats his suggestions regarding the route, and how seriously admonishes concerning certain rapids or portages. Only by a transient gleam of the eye does he betray his own eagerness to become a bird of passage as he bids his guests a heartfelt farewell.

The canoe grates away from the shore, the voices subside, the Indian steps silently into the stern, the steady sweep of the paddle begins—we leave with sober melancholy and ever and always we breathe a fervid prayer that at least while we live it will be possible to

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launch the canoe upon the impetuous streams that wash the domain where the "lords of the wintry lakes and boundless forests" once held imperious sway, and when current and paddle bear us swiftly away that our lingering backward glance may rest upon the fort and behold at the top of the tall staff the slowly heaving folds of the blood-red banner of the HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

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